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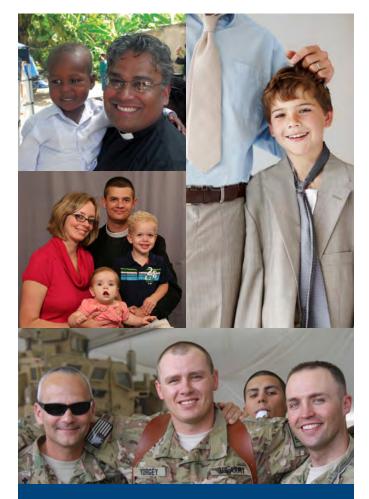


Be an Encourager By Rev. David C. Fleming

A Theological Recipe for Forming Pastors and Deaconesses By Dr. Charles A. Gieschen

Supporting Future Pastors and Deaconesses By Mr. Gary L. Nahrwold

CONTENTS Volume Sixteen, Number Three



For the Life of the World

PUBLISHER Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. President

MANAGING EDITOR Jayne E. Sheafer

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Colleen M. Bartzsch

COPY EDITOR Trudy E. Behning **ART DIRECTOR** Steve J. Blakey

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FEATURES

4 Be an Encourager By Rev. David C. Fleming

Every time a new pastor or deaconess is sent out into the world, hope lives on. The Lord knows we need them. He knows our congregations and communities need willing and well-trained servants... We need sowers of Christ and reapers of Christians for joy.

7 A Theological Recipe for Forming **Pastors and Deaconesses** By Dr. Charles A. Gieschen

What is the theological recipe for forming faithful pastors and deaconesses? Is there a formula that works every time it is used and produces the same result? Each of us probably shares some ideas about what it takes to form a pastor or deaconess.

10 Supporting Future Pastors and Deaconesses By Mr. Gary L. Nahrwold

As I pondered writing on the topic of encouraging future pastors and deaconesses, my thoughts kept being drawn to the past. For over 165 years the people of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have shown unwavering support for Concordia Theological Seminary by raising up future church workers and providing much needed financial support for their formation and education.

Also in this issue:

What Does This Mean?p. 14
Called to Servep. 16
In the Fieldp. 18
Retreat to the Seminaryp. 21
Seminary Marks Close of 166th Academic yearp. 22
Military Projectp. 25
Seminary Guildp. 26
Alumni News: Encouragementp. 27
Profiles in Giving: We Are Thankfulp. 28
Bible Study: Encouragmentp. 30

<u>nogunager</u> By Rev. David C. Fleming

the Life of the World

remember a disturbing movie. It portrayed a violent and ruthless modern society in ugly civil war, but worst of all there were no babies, no children and no expectant mothers. Consequently, there was no hope. The story followed the only pregnant mother on earth. When her child was born, cried and was carried into the strife-ridden streets, everything stopped. The warring madness ceased. All were enthralled by the first newborn in over a decade. Hope lived again.

Every time a new pastor or deaconess is sent out into the world, hope lives on. The Lord knows we need them. He knows our congregations and communities need willing and welltrained servants. He taught, "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together" (John 4:35-36). We need sowers of Christ and reapers of Christians for joy.

So what can we do to encourage men to study to be pastors and women to prepare to serve as deaconesses?

Pray. Jesus called on His followers to cry out, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2). He also taught us to pray to our Father, "hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come," which is a daily request that the Lord allow His saving Word to be proclaimed faithfully for the joy and edifying of many people. Pray privately and publicly. Pray with your family and your congregation. Give thanks to the Lord for the pastors and deaconesses He's given us, but also ask that He send bright men and bright women to prepare for churchly vocations.

Remember. The author of Hebrews directs the church, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God" (Hebrews 13:7). The author of Hebrews goes on in chapter 13 to fill out what this remembering includes: giving thanks to God, doing good, sharing the things they have with their leaders and submitting to those who teach the Lord's Word. A husband remembers his wife on their wedding anniversary

not just by thinking about his wife, but by acting on that remembering through thanksgiving to God, kind words to his beloved and perhaps a thoughtful gift; so Christians remember their pastors and church workers by similar actions. What a blessing when pastors and deaconesses faithfully serve and congregations remember them by giving thanks to the Lord for them. providing them with financial support and joyfully receiving the Word of the Lord. The congregation's love for those who serve her goes a long way in encouraging others to serve in these ways, too.

Teach. Young children learn the variety of different vocations. By junior high students are starting to narrow down what work is most interesting to them from the possibilities they know. So invite a pastor or deaconess to talk to young students about their work. I still remember my pastor coming to our first grade classroom at our Lutheran school. He showed his vestments, explained what they meant and talked about his work. I also remember he asked the boys to raise their hands if they wanted to become pastors. Almost all the boys did. I didn't. I wanted to become an airline pilot, but pastor was certainly an option I knew about.

Every time a new pastor or deaconess is sent out into the world, hope lives on. The Lord knows we need them. He knows our congregations and communities need willing and well-trained servants. **Encourage.** I cannot think of a pastor or deaconess who was not encouraged along the way by several dear Christians. It is very powerful when you tell some man, young or not, "I think you'd be a good pastor." One part of encouraging is giving opportunities to serve. Where I serve we train confirmed young men to carry the cross and processional torches giving them an important part in the church's confession of Christ. Even better is teaching men and women the riches of Holy Scripture so that they might be prepared to give a joyful answer concerning their trust in Christ. Inviting possible future pastors and deaconesses to assist in teaching Sunday School or Vacation Bible School gives them opportunities to see if they are interested in teaching the faith. Sending high school men to Christ Academy gives them a fun opportunity to taste life at the seminary. The congregation I serve has been generous in picking up the tab so there are less impediments to attending.

Support. Seminary education is delightful but rigorous. The cost can be daunting. As the Lord allows, give generously from the bounty He provides to support individual students or the seminary's scholarship fund so that future workers are not deterred. Rarely does someone prepare for full-time work in the church expecting to get rich, but it certainly helps if the pastor or deaconess can begin with little or no debt. If you don't know of a seminary student, consider adopting one.

It's been a joy here to watch a few men prepare for the office of the Holy Ministry and to send a woman to prepare for the churchly vocation of deaconess. This May, almost exactly 25 years after I received my Divine Call, I was delighted to watch a young man, who has become dear to our congregation, receive his Call into the Holy Ministry. I pray that together we can watch many more pastors and deaconesses be prepared and sent in answer to our Lord's bidding.

Rev. David C. Fleming serves as pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church,

Grand Rapids, Michigan. You can learn more about the ministry at Our Savior by visiting their website at www.oursavior-gr.org.



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Want More Info?

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a deaconess or pastor or if you would like to encourage a prospective student, the best place to start is with the CTS Office of Admission. You can get started at www.ctsfw.edu/Admission and learn about the programs offered, get financial aid information and connect with our Relocation Coordinator.

You can e-mail us anytime at Admission@ctsfw.edu or connect with a counselor over the phone at 800-481-2155.

Choosing to become a deaconess or pastor is a noble task, and we look forward to working with you as you begin your journey!

> CTS Admission staff (left-right): Kristin Hodge, Deaconess Admission Counselor; Rev. Andrew Yeager, Admission Counselor; Rev. John Dreyer, Director of Admission; Marsha Zimmerman, Relocation Coordinator.